

USAID's assistance to orphans and vulnerable children in Nigeria



Acada learning center, Okpella, Edo state

Mrs. Agnes Oreye is a 43 year old widow with four children. She lives in Agenebode, Edo state where she also plays the role of a caregiver to two other children who lost their parents to HIV/AIDS. In spite of her relatively poor circumstances, she copes with life, feeding her family from the proceeds of her trade in staple foodstuff (rice and cowpea) provided by USAID/Nigeria as an income generating grant. The Mission has been strengthening the capacities of families to protect and care for orphans and vulnerable children by providing business education, equipment and in-kind grants for income generating activities for people living with HIV/AIDS and people affected by AIDS. Full of praises, Agnes is most grateful. "God will reward you for what you have done" she says.

With the largest population in Africa, Nigeria is home to an estimated 1.2 million children who have been orphaned or made vulnerable to HIV infection as a result of having lost one or both parents to HIV/AIDS. Despite advances in care and treatment, the rate of orphans and vulnerable children in Nigeria will continue to increase in the coming years.

A few miles away in Okpella town, 25 pupils between the age of five and eleven are listening to their teacher at Utayoke Primary School. You could easily assume this to be a normal Nigerian primary school where children learn their three 'Rs'. But this is not a regular school. Welcome to the Acada learning center in Okpella. It is one of the 11 Acada learning centers for orphans and vulnerable children funded by USAID. Over 2,100 Nigerian children, who routinely would not be able to attend school due to HIV/AIDS, are provided with numeracy and literacy skills before they are integrated back into the regular school system.

The curriculum also provides tutoring in English, life skills and mentoring activities which prepare these children for their transition back into formal education. The children are taught for three hours in the afternoon, five days a week and are provided with books, writing materials, uniforms, sandals and school bags for the ten months they spend at the learning centers. Nutritional and psycho-socio support is also provided.

The centers also receive support from traditional rulers and their local communities. For example, Alhaji Tafida Abubakar Ila, the emir of Rano in Kano state, mobilized the local elite to support 75 orphans and vulnerable children at the Acada learning center in the town. In this case, they pay the salaries of the teachers and provide school materials and food supplements for the pupils. This is the outcome of an advocacy visit to the emir by Umah Support Group, a local USAID partner.

USAID/Nigeria is also involved in raising awareness through advocacy and social mobilization to create a supportive environment for children affected by HIV/AIDS and reduce stigma and discrimination against them. For out of school youth, the Mission provides preventive education and skills to protect them from HIV infection.

Through funding from the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), USAID working with other United States Government (USG) agencies and with the Government of Nigeria to support to nearly 67,000 orphans and vulnerable children in 20 out of 36 states in Nigeria.

The United States, through USAID and other USG agencies in Nigeria, provides ongoing support to fight HIV/AIDS as part of its broader policy priority to invest in people. Investing in People is one of the central pillars of our Framework for Partnership with Nigeria.